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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

OMB-01 CU-02 SCCT-01 /065 W
---------- 103997
R 031103Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9483
INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 4876

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV TH
SUBJECT: POSSIBILITY OF SOCIALIST PARTY WITHDRAWAL FROM THE APRIL 4 ELECTION

REF: (A) BANGKOK 4638, (B) BANGKOK 3108

SUMMARY. SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND CONSIDERING WITHDRAWING FROM THE APRIL ELECTIONS OVER THE MURDER OF BUNSANONG BUNYOTHAYAN. SOCIALIST CANDIDATES WORRIED ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY DURING CAMPAIGN. LITTLE INDICATION FROM POLICE THAT CRIME IS NEAR SOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

1. AS A RESULT OF THE RECENT MURDERS OF PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL BNSANONG BUNYOTHAYAN (REFTEL A) , THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND (SPT) IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING WITHDRAWING ITS CANDIDATES FROM THE ELECTION ON APRIL 4. THE PARTY HAS MET SEVERAL TIMES TO DISCUSS WHAT ACTION IT SHOULD TAKE BUT HAS MADE NO FINAL DECISIONS. ACCORDING TO THAI NEWSPAPERS OF MARCH 3, THE PARTY WILL HOLD A MEETING ON MARCH 5 TO DECIDE THE ISSUE. THE ASSASSINATION HAS CONTINUED TO RECEIVE WIDE AND DETAILED COVERAGE IN THE THAI PRESS.

2. A TESTIMONIAL PANEL DISCUSSION, FEATURING SPT LEADER COLONEL SOMKHIT SISANGKHOM AND BUNSANONG'S WIDOW AMONG
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OTHERS, WAS HELD AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ON MARCH 1.

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THE DISCUSSION WAS CONFINED MAINLY TO EULOGIZING BUNSAN-
ONG, AND WAS GENERALLY APOLITICAL. A SOCIALIST
PARTY RALLY HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR 4:00 P.. ON MARCH 3
AT THE SANAM LUANG IN BANGKOK. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE
ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMANT VOICED OVER THE MURDER SINCE THE
BEGINNING OF THE FUNERAL ON FEBRUARY 29 (REFTEL A).

3. SOCIALIST PARTY CANDIDATES AND MEMBERS HAVE BEEN
INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY SINCE
THEY CAME UNER HEAVY ATTACK BY THE RIGHT WING AT THE
TIME OF THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT
IN JANUARY. NAWAPHON AND OTHER RIGHT WING ORGANI-
ZATIONS HAVE USE VARIOUS TACTICS TO INTIMIDATE THE
SOCIALISTS SINCE NEW ELECTIONS WERE ANNOUNCED, AND VARIOUS
SOCIALISTS HAVE RECEIVED DEATH THREATS (REFTEL B). THE
MURDER OF DR. BUNSANONG HAS NATURALLY INCREASED CONCERN
AMONG CANDIDATES, AND SOME REPORTEDLY FEEL THAT COMPAIGN-
ING IS NOT WORTH THE RISK INVOLVED. MOST SPT CANDIDATES
AND MANY MEMBERS HAVE ARMED THEMSELVES FOR PROTECTION,
AND THEY ARE GUARDING COL. SOMKHIT WHEN HE APPEARS IN
PUBLIC. THE SPT HAS DECLINED, HOWEVER, TO REQUEST SPECIAL
POLICE PROTECTION.

4. IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHO WAS BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION,
AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS FROM THE POLICE THAT
THEY ARE CLOSE TO SOLVING THE CRIME. IT NOW APPEARS
THAT BUNSANONG WAS SHOT FROM AN AUTOMOBILE, AND NOT A
MOTORCYCLE AS WAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REFTEL A), AND A
FEW WITNESSES HAVE RESPONDED TO POLICE APPEALS FOR
INFORMATION. SPEEDY APPREHENSION OF THE KILLERS WOULD
HELP DEFUSE WHATEVER POTENTIAL EXISTS AMONG SPT
SUPPORTERS FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS OR DEMONSTRATIONS.
IT WOULD ALSO MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR LEFTISTS TO DRAG THE
U.S. INTO THE AFFAIR.
WHITEHOUSE

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